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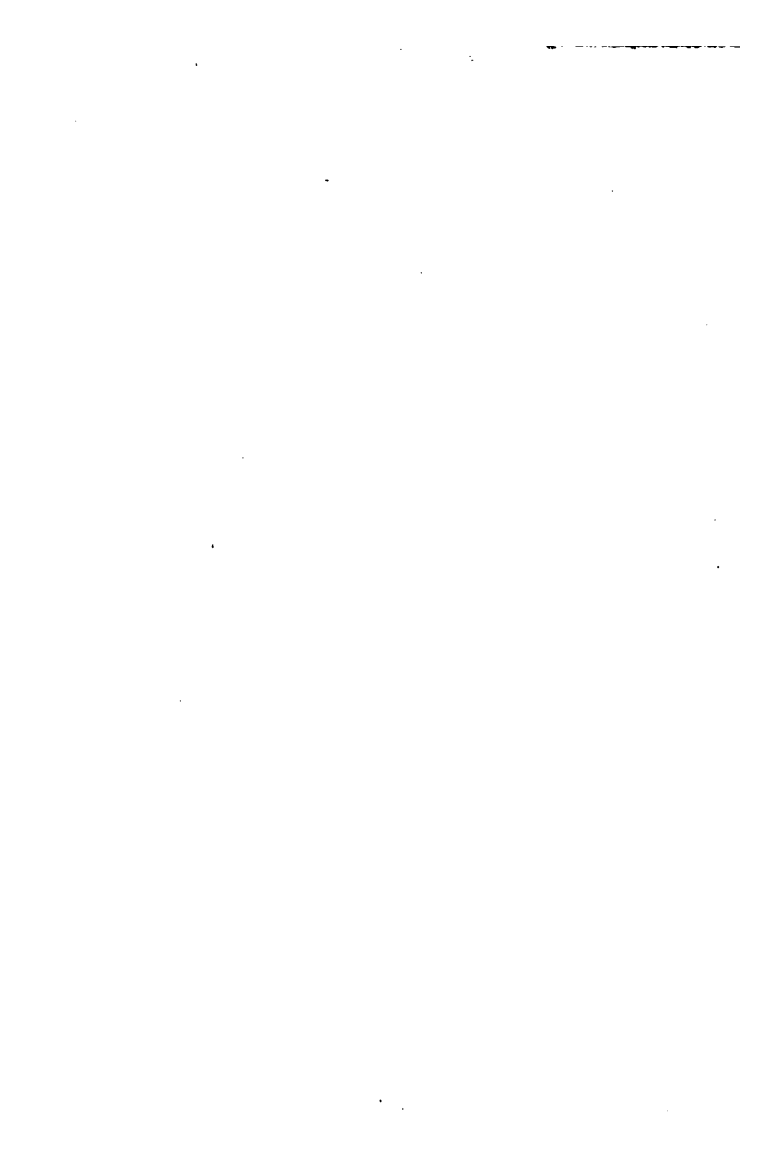
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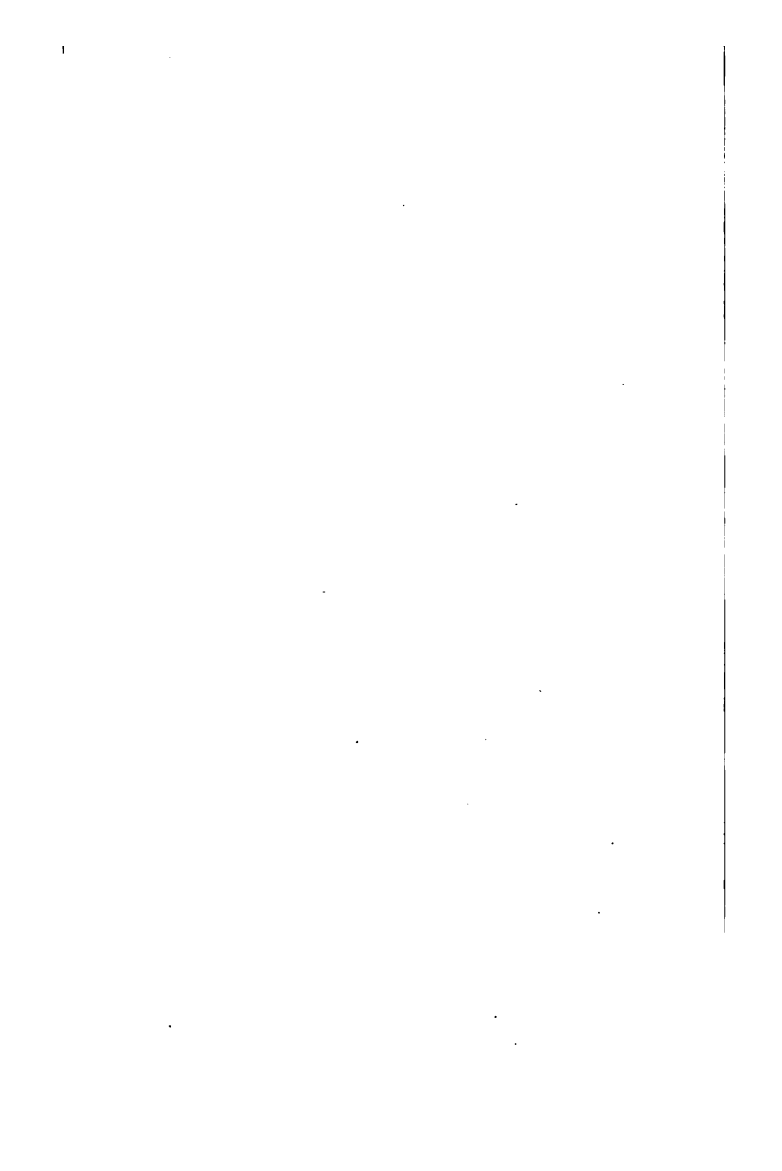
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THE CHRISTIAN'S DREAM

AT THE

FOOT OF JACOB'S LADDER:

BEING

A DISPLAY OF MAN'S ASCENT FROM
EARTH TO HEAVEN.

BY

A LANCASHIRE CLERGYMAN.

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THE CHRISTIAN'S DREAM AT THE FOOT OF JACOB'S LADDER.

It was a summer's night : sweet sleep bound me in its refreshing bonds : I slept, but my mind was waking, and things celestial and terrestrial passed before me in all the clearness of real life. I dreamed ; and in my dream I saw the ladder Jacob saw ; raised, as Jacob saw it raised, and reaching from earth to heaven. I saw and wondered ; and as I wondered and longed to understand, there came a holy man of God, with a "little book" in his right hand, and stood behind me. His face was fair as the early morning ; his hair was gray, and fell upon his shoulders in graceful and luxuriant folds ; his eye was mild and blue ; his forehead large ; piety lodged in his whole appearance. At my side

he placed himself; and as he watched my earnest gaze, he asked me, "Knowest thou what thou seest? Knowest thou what this divine vision portends—what truths are set forth by it?" I answered, "They are too high for me; my unassisted knowledge cannot reach them." Then he said, "Listen, and understand, and be wise for evermore:—The ladder sets forth the different portions of the life of one who is enabled by God's help to gain the crown of immortality that the Lamb has purchased with his blood for his redeemed people. You see the base resting upon earth? That represents man in his fallen state—of the earth, earthy, seeking his chief good in the things of earth; imbedded in what is earthly, carnal, sensual, devilish. It represents man keenly alive to everything that may gain a name, or procure him renown, or gratify his wish for pleasures. It represents man engrossed with this world and turned away from Heaven. It is a gloomy and saddening picture. I perceive you will scarce believe it. You cannot comprehend how every one of your race is so thoroughly imbued with the spirit of disregard for what is

above, and so bent down upon what is below. Yet this little book tells me it is true. Were I to speak in any other words, I should be only using flattering terms; but God forbid that I should use flattering terms; in so doing my Master would take me away. Open the book and read: 'The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.'" On hearing this I became sorrowful in heart, knowing that it had been written also in the little book, "the wages of sin is death." The old man, perceiving my sorrow, took me gently by the hand, and thus proceeded:—"The picture I have sketched is enough to fill your soul with grief, and even I myself should weep had I no other intelligence to communicate. Darkness and bitterness and sorrow would for ever and for ever pursue your race had I nothing in addition. I have, however, something more. What is that that is written on the first step of the ladder?" I looked, and read in very large letters, "**DISTURBED MIND—UNEASY CONSCIENCE.**"

"In these words you perceive the commencement of man's ascent from his natural

depth of darkness and sorrow. God, by his Spirit, is continually striving with the human heart. He meets him ever in the varied walks of life, probing the conscience, alarming the mind, suggesting thoughts of futurity, awaking fears with regard to the soul's salvation and its coming destiny. God sends his messengers to awaken the guilty and slumbering consciences of men buried in all the dross and corruption of defiling earthliness. You have seen the pestilence mowing down the human race in thousands and in millions. That pestilence was God's messenger. You have seen the storm rushing in terrible might across the ocean. That storm was another heaven-sent messenger. It strikes some gallant vessel: the vessel runs upon the shore; the valuable cargo is scattered by wind and wave. The vessel, and all it bore within it, is lost to its possessor; but in its loss it proves a great benefactor to him who had called it by its name: an electric current, as it were, ran from this vessel's loss even into the heart of its master, and, by God's providence, excited the conscience and disturbed the mind. You have seen a man

blessed with wealth and riches and children in abundance. You have seen such an one living without any serious care or thought of the future provision of his immortal part; living from day to day as if his houses and his lands, his children and his wife were his for ever; as if his title to them defied all dispute, and his possession of them all interruption. You have seen disease enter the mansion of such an one: the fairest jewel is attacked; his best loved child feels the power of some prevailing disease. He sickens and pines, and at last—yes, at last, although the best art and the most skilful physicians were sought—yes, at last, although father and mother watched night and day, day and night—yes, at last, although tears roll down, and a household is convulsed—at last, the dearest child sinks down and dies. Let others say that a chance has happened, but do you learn from me that the stroke was the messenger of God to awaken the slumbering conscience of this wealthy man. Yes: God's messengers come; the sleepers are rendered uneasy in their beds; their position becomes a troubled one; there

is within a desolating want brought to light now for the first time. Earth, heaven, body, soul, destruction, salvation, God, judgment, are matters that now appear of some importance. Often they are so tossed with the heavings thus occasioned, that they cry out each one, 'What must I do? Earth is flying rapidly from me; what must I do to retain it? Judgment is coming; what must I do to meet it? My sins are crushing me down to ruin. Oh! how can I get rid of their fearful burden? My mind and heart are defiled; by what process can they be purified?' This is not, indeed, the effect produced in all cases; but it is the end the events are calculated to produce. Some, like that hardened sinner we read of in this little book, refuse to hear God's messengers, and harden their hearts against the messages they bear: they harden their hearts even when their possessions disappear and their first-born are cut down: they act thus, yet we must not think therefore that every conscience is disturbed in vain—that all land is ploughed up without gaining some advantage. Many, God be praised—yea, very many,"—

and here the old man looked as if his heart were overflowing with gratitude,—“very many are snatched like firebrands from the burning; many come from the east and from the west, and from the north and from the south, to the banquet of the Lamb, whose first step in holy things was caused by the arrow that disturbed their sleepy consciences.”

At this part of the conversation I interrupted my aged friend with the following inquiry—an inquiry I have often pondered in silence and in sorrow, I have thought over in wonder and in amazement. I asked him: —“Why is it that any turn away from the whisperings of conscience? Why is it that there are any who refuse to lend an attentive ear to conscience’s mighty pleadings? Why are there so many who, in opposition to the strivings of conscience and the pleadings of the Spirit, and the judgments of God, and the warnings of God’s ambassadors,—why are there so many bent upon their own destruction?”

“Young man,” he said, “thou requirest a hard thing from me; thou art intruding into things that are known only to God.

This little book says, Secret things belong only to God, and that now you have not faculties equal to the unravelling of this important and mysterious question. Remember that now you see through a glass darkly. In your earthly tabernacle, possessed only of earthly senses, you cannot comprehend with God what is the length and breadth and height and depth of all his ways: now you must be contented with a small measure of insight into things divine; a measure, indeed, amply sufficient to guide you in safety to yon bright abode,"—(and the old man pointed upwards,)—"albeit not a measure calculated to satisfy every craving curiosity of the human mind. A time, however, will arrive when your faculties will be more fully able than at present to unrol God's doings; when you will be more competent to see the grand uniformity of all God's great workmanship. Once I myself was lost in amazement at the ruin of immortal souls. I could not behold without emotion the immense waste, as I thought, visible in the natural world. I heard in wonder of millions of seeds *sown in the earth*, but never coming to

the light—of seeds *coming* up, but dying prematurely—of trees producing blossoms, many of which never ripened into fruit. I looked in wonder on the animal creation; but I looked with far greater wonder upon the utter ruin that fell upon beings who might have been happy for eternity. When I tabernacled in the flesh, these things were mysterious, very mysterious; but now all mystery is vanished. Admitted within the ‘sacred adytum,’ learning in the immediate presence of Deity, I can now see everywhere and in all things a full, perfect, and sufficient solution to all those difficulties that distracted my mind during the time I lived on earth. To you, therefore, I say, wait; wait patiently the unrolling of God’s volume; wait patiently the reconcilment of your difficulties; wait patiently until Christ Jesus, seated high above principalities and powers, will utter in the ears of his redeemed people those things that have been kept secret since the foundation of the world. Watch and pray, and wait. Trust Him in whose hands are the eternal issues, and in good time every cloud and shadow will flee away from your soul.”

So the old man answered my inquiry ; and perceiving the reasonableness of what he said, and knowing that the time of waiting would be short, very short, I determined to banish from my mind all conjectures with regard to the secret purposes of God, and to follow closely the things revealed by the Spirit in the "little book."

When the old man had ascertained that what he had said about the ruin of souls had satisfied my mind, he resumed his explanation of the ladder:—

"The mind being set in motion and the conscience being troubled, the sinner will seek for rest for his weary soul. There are many ways devised by the adversary to keep the sinner fixed upon earth, and to lure him to seek his peace in what is terrestrial. The 'subtile one' leads him to pleasure ; but the sinner, though led away, alas ! too often, finds no means through pleasure of flinging off the heavy load that weighs him down in wretchedness and sorrow,—nay, pleasure rather adds to his misery ; and when he has retired from the intoxication and the glitter and the whirl and the thoughtlessness of

pleasure—when he communes in his own chamber, and is locked in by himself—then he feels the utter impossibility of applying any balm to his weary soul by the agency of pleasure. Again, the ‘subtile one’ persuades the sinner that his peace may be gained by purchase; that works will atone for errors of the past, and enable him to stand up in the presence of his Maker—pure, spotless, holy, harmless, undefiled. And often the sinner is beguiled into the belief that such doing will make atonement. But, alas! no greater delusion ever issued from the abode of darkness. The ‘little book’ saith, this kind cometh not of works but of grace; that as every moment of our being is the property of our Maker, the past, the present, and the future; the past we owe, the present we owe, and the future we owe; therefore the obedience of the present, cannot compensate for the disobedience of the past. And I could tell you of other ways the ‘subtile one’ uses, to draw away his victims from the only way that has been given for human salvation; but perhaps I have said enough to show how great is the danger that surrounds the descendants

of Adam, during the days of their pilgrimage."

"But what," said I, "is the fountain of peace, the source of rest and comfort to the soul panting after ease and consolation?"

"What is written on the next step of the ladder?" asked my aged friend. I looked up, and read in very large characters the words,

"COME UNTO JESUS, ALL YE THAT LABOUR AND ARE HEAVY LADEN, AND HE WILL GIVE YOU REST." "Here is," said the old man,

"rest for the troubled conscience, rest under every burden, rest in every trial, rest in every sorrow, rest in every pain, rest in the businesses of life, rest on the bed of languishment, rest when the joints of the earthly tabernacle are failing, rest when the spirit is dismissed from the body, rest in the mansions of the Father,—rest, abiding, unbroken rest. Rest, how great, how dear, how precious! You have seen the ship tossed by the furious tempest; you have seen the canvas torn into shreds, and the masts shivered, and fear and trembling written on every face; perhaps you have seen the ship escaping the storm, and entering some friendly harbour, lying calmly

at rest after its troubles, the sailors thankful to have been preserved from falling victims to the wide waste of waters. This then is great rest, great refreshment and consolation ; but great as it is, it is nothing to the rest that the weary soul finds in bringing its burden to the foot of its dear Lord and Saviour ; by experience, I can speak of its mighty power. Once I knew what trouble meant, and sorrow, and bitterness, and anguish. Once I used to say in the morning, 'Would it were evening,' and in the evening, 'Would it were morning ;' but when I looked to Jesus, the blessed Jesus, peace commenced to flow in upon my soul ; and having received help from God, it never ceased to occupy my mind in a greater or less degree, until I was summoned to the presence of the Saviour, where I now possess fulness of joy,—yes, fulness of joy, fulness of joy. Have you ever pondered over these three words of holy writ, 'fulness of joy ?' Do you think you comprehend their meaning ? To an inhabitant of earth, I fear they are incomprehensible. Oh, there is in them a height and a depth, that eternity will alone unfold. It is joy to know

Jesus, to look to the Lamb on earth,—but it is fulness of joy, to wear in his presence the spotless robe of white that He purchased with his blood, when He died on Calvary. It is joy to be led by the Spirit, and to bring forth the fruits of the Spirit; but it is fulness of joy, to drink of the river of the water of life, as it gushes from the throne of God and of the Lamb. It is joy, to have a hope of passing through the eternal door, into the presence-chamber of the King of kings; but it is fulness of joy, to know and to feel that the door is passed, and that we are assured of a place there for ever and ever.”

“Fulness of joy!—how can I,” the old man exclaimed in rapture,—“how can I explain thy meaning adequately? It may be negatively set forth, but its positive delights are beyond the powers of any being on earth to understand.

“Peace commences in the soul, when the sinner looks to Jesus. The seed of peace is then, as it were, sown in his heart, to be developed gradually, as he mounts up step by step the ladder of Christian experience; look higher up, and read what is written.”

I looked, and read, "CHRIST IS MADE UNTO US WISDOM." "After the sinner has been brought to the Saviour, he becomes wise : wise with regard to his own past life,—wise to know that he had been walking in ruinous paths and courses, fraught with death eternal to his soul,—wise to know that all his own exertions after righteousness, must be considered filthy rags. Wise to perceive the great love of God, as displayed in Jesus ; wise to behold the great meetness of his crucified Redeemer ; wise to see the inexhaustible properties of the fountain that hath been opened for sin and uncleanness ; wise to understand how God can be just, and yet the justifier of him that believeth on Jesus ; yea, he becomes wise, who sits under the shadow of the cross. Adam became wise, when he ate of the tree of knowledge, but it was a wisdom that did not profit. The sinner becomes wise, when he shelters beneath the branches of the tree of life, and plucks and eats its life-conferring fruit. He then becomes wise as the serpent, and harmless as the dove ; and the wisdom thus gained, unlike the wisdom gained by Adam, when he sinned, is

a profitable wisdom,—yea, very profitable, for ‘it hath the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.’ Indeed, it may well be called wisdom, for the eyes of the mind are enlightened, and the eyes of the understanding are enlightened, and the eyes of the heart are enlightened, and the eyes of the soul, and the eyes of the conscience,—nay more, the whole man is enlightened to discern good and evil. Oh, he becomes very wise, wise with a wisdom that will never fade.”

At this point of the conversation, I could not forbear interrupting the aged seer, for I was very anxious to get a doubt resolved, a doubt that rose in my mind while the old man was speaking.

“You have spoken,” I said, “of sinners coming to Christ, of finding peace in so doing, and of Christ being made unto them wisdom, and of their becoming very wise; but during the whole time of your speaking, I was unable to discern even the slightest allusion to the word repentance. You have not said that the sinner must repent, before he come to Christ and God.”

“My dear friend,” he replied, “it is true,

I have not distinctly, and in so many words declared, that he who would gain a place in heaven, must repent, and that truly, of all his sins, before he is received into favour; but is it not implied, in what I have said with regard to the troubled soul looking unto Jesus; does not the looking up *to* the favour of Christ, imply the looking away *from* the lusts of the world, the flesh, and the devil? Does not the supplication for peace, imply a hatred of those things that caused the soul anxiety? In that beautiful parable contained in the 'little book,' on the Prodigal Son, the word repentance, is not mentioned; albeit, it is implied, when the once riotous, but heart-broken young man exclaimed, 'I will arise, and go to my father,'—and moreover, it is only when the sinner has been made wise through Christ that he can understand how deeply he needs repentance. When he is fully sensible of how great a part his sins had in crucifying the Lord of glory—how long-suffering, and gentle, and loving, Christ Jesus had been from all eternity—how long he had been living in ingratitude and unthankfulness, paying no homage and yielding no fruit.

When he comes to consider this in all its totality, then he will be convinced how great is his need of bitter repentance. When the love of Christ has taken possession of his heart, and when he feels that Christ loves him, and that he loves Christ, then will tears run down in floods on the recollection of the sins he had committed, and the commandments he had transgressed, and the duties he had neglected to perform. Nothing ! nothing draws out the soul to repentance more than a true view of the love of the Saviour. He who is gone to Christ, and knows that for his sake Christ Jesus though he was rich yet became poor, that for his sake he was born in a manger, lived a life of humility on earth, was treated with scorn, was insulted by wicked and abandoned men, was forsaken by friends, yea, was forsaken by God himself—died for him a death of shame, descended into hell for him, ascended into heaven, and opened for him the kingdom of glory. He who has gained the knowledge of all this cannot but be truly sorry that he ever sinned against a Benefactor so good, so kind, so loving. You will perceive, therefore, that I

had not forgotten repentance, but that I considered it an inevitable attendant of every look cast in sincerity on Christ. This is my own experience, and it will be the experience of every Christian ; his repentance will be greatly quickened, the deeper the insight he obtains into the connexion that subsists between him and the crucified Jesus of Nazareth."

The old man having thus satisfied my inquiry, proceeded with his explanation and requested me to read what was written on the next step of the ladder, whereupon I read as follows,—“CHRIST IS MADE UNTO US RIGHTEOUSNESS.”

“But,” said I, “how short is the space visible between this and what I read of the wisdom given by Christ.” “True, most true,” said the old man, “the distance is so short that it is scarcely perceptible, and the reason of this is, wisdom and righteousness are intimately united, they are children of the same birth, they are twin sisters, and he who is truly wise will be truly righteous ; but, perhaps, you would wish to hear more, particularly the meaning of this last inscription.

“Christ Jesus was spotless and undefiled ;

'He did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth;' He never, neither in thought, nor yet in word, nor in deed, transgressed the law; He lived in the midst of a wicked and naughty world, but was not of it; He passed through it untainted and pure, and at the end of his appointed ministry He died that by his death He might open the kingdom of God to his people. His righteousness was perfect, satisfying sufficient to exhaust the punishment due to a broken law. It was a righteousness ample enough to cover all the sinners of the world in which you live. The chiefest of sinners can be covered in it. The deepest of sins can be forgotten through its means.

"When the sinner fixes his eye sincerely and faithfully on Jesus; when he casts all his care upon the shoulders of the surety; when he looks to Christ, and dwells on Christ, and lives in Christ, then Christ, in the exercise of those privileges that were his as soon as He purchased the world of sinners with his blood, bestows upon the sinner thus looking to and living in Him, the benefit of his perfect righteousness, by which gift the sinner

is written down in the book of life as one justified and restored to all the many blessings that He had forfeited through sin and wickedness. Every being that would be holy, must put on him the whole righteousness of Christ. Clothed in this, none can detect spot or blemish. If Satan could he gladly would ; we know the spirit of the adversary. In the eyes of God even the heavens are not clear, yet as He said of the Son when on earth, so he declares respecting each one that believeth on Him, 'In thee am I well pleased.' Oh!" exclaimed the old man, "it is a noble covering this robe of righteousness. The accusations of the devil cannot pierce it; the wrath of God cannot pierce it.

"It is an armour so full, perfect, and protective, that no external attack can cause damage to him who wears it. Oh! well is it for the human race that they can procure this robe of righteousness; this wedding garment of fine linen to appear in; it is written in this 'little book,' 'without holiness no man shall see the Lord.' Well, therefore, doubly well, for the sinners of humanity, that the Son of God has gained the privilege of

presenting all who love him, to his Father covered with his imputed righteousness. Had man to achieve an unsullied robe of righteousness for himself, could he ever become pure and holy? Could he change his disobedience into obedience? Could he change his hate into love? Can the Ethiopian change his skin, and the leopard his spots? Believe me, young man, if one holy unsullied act were all the price requisite for the purchase of heaven, there liveth, there never hath lived on earth the man that could lay claim to such an act. The best act of the best man on earth is defiled with sin. The motive is sinful in some degree, or the object is sinful, or the means used are to some degree sinful; or if not absolutely sinful—they are deficient, and if this be the case with the righteous, how must it be with those who know not God and the power of his love.

“It is a device, a fearful device of the evil one, to speak of righteousness in any degree independent of Christ. I know the Romish Church speaks of the merits of the Virgin Mary, and of the merits of the saints, and of

the merits of good works, but alas ! they greatly err, not knowing the Scriptures. The Virgin Mary had no merits to rejoice in but the merits of 'God her Saviour.' The saints had nothing to glory in except that in which the great Apostle rejoiced—"the cross or atonement of our blessed Lord and Master,"—and no work has anything to recommend it to God, until the doer of it be united by a lively faith to Christ Jesus, when it is esteemed as a work of Christ's, and its deficiencies are concealed in the imputed righteousness of Jesus. They who are *out* of Christ are deep in the pollution of iniquity, and their fairest action, in the sight of God, is defiled and unholy. They who are in Christ are accepted for his sake, and their actions are, for the same reasons, accepted in the Beloved. But, perhaps, I have said enough to make plain to you the statement,—**'CHRIST IS MADE UNTO US RIGHTEOUSNESS.'**

"Look, therefore, on the next step of the ladder, and read the inscription there." I looked and read, "**CHRIST IS MADE UNTO US SANCTIFICATION,**"—and as I continued steadfastly looking at the words, the old man

inquired the reason of my so doing. "I am perplexed," I said, "by the similarity of the terms righteousness and sanctification. At first sight they appear identical in meaning, and yet from their position on the ladder, I am persuaded they must be different in their meaning." "They are different, indeed," said the old man, "different, yea very different, and yet how often have their meanings been confounded.

"Listen attentively, and I will endeavour to explain to you how they differ. Righteousness in the sense it bears where you see it written before you, imports the righteousness of God, or the righteousness of Christ, or rather the righteousness conferred by God; it alludes to something done for us in order that we may be esteemed righteous; righteousness is equivalent to justification; and when Christ is said to be made unto us righteousness, the meaning is, as I partly explained to you before,—that he has done that by which whosoever believeth on Him becomes as entitled to heaven as if he had never sinned at all. But sanctification imports, that something is done *within* for the sinner. Sanctifi-

cation refers to the heart, and mind, and soul, and inward affections. It refers to the softening of the heart, and the renewing of the mind, and the purifying of the soul, and the elevating the affections. Sanctification is, moreover, a progressive work, while justification is a work completed at the very first moment the sinner can say—‘Lord, I believe.’ Sanctification commences when the wanderer conceives the thought of returning to his Father, but is never ended, until he reaches the mansion in the skies.

“The work of Sanctification keeps constantly growing—there are many stages in its progress. Saul exclaiming, ‘Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?’ is the first step. Paul in his old age writing, ‘I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith, henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of glory,’ this is one of the concluding steps. The unclean heart does not become in a twinkling the clean heart. It is not in a moment that the impure man can eject the strong giant of impurity; nor the covetous man the strong giant of covetousness; nor the blasphemous man the

strong giant of blasphemy; nor the thief the strong giant of stealing; no, these having had undisputed possession for a long time do not resign the mastery without a struggle. A long life of threescore years and ten, or of fourscore years, will find the believer capable of growing in sanctification; the longest life will never find him perfected. He will make great advances; he will grow greatly in love to God and man; greatly in purity, in faith, in meekness, in prudence, in gentleness, in long-suffering, in brotherly love, in readiness to spend and be spent in the promotion of true religion and virtue; greatly will he grow in all these, but perfection, absolute perfection is beyond his reach until mortality be swallowed up in immortal life. The 'little book' commands all the followers of Jesus to aim at perfection equal to the perfection of the Father; for he who wrote it knew that the higher the aim the higher will be the attainment of the Christian; but it nowhere brings under the notice of its readers, even a single example of any merely human being attaining to the full height of the standard of unsullied perfection. I know that there are

some who believe that sinless perfection may be gained, even in the period of the spiritual warfare on earth; nor will I quarrel with them for holding this opinion, if they raise, as high as Scripture does, the standard of Christian perfection; in this case it will stimulate their faith, and wake up their energies, and make them all-eager to press earnestly forward toward the prize of their high calling; but I will condemn them if, while cleaving to the doctrine of sinless perfection, they wish to lower its standard beyond what is laid down in the Word of God. If they consider that perfection can exist in company with sundry and divers inconsistencies and irregularities, certain involuntary omissions and commissions, in this case I must condemn their adherence to the doctrine, for it will tend to make them contented with a narrow proportion of spiritual graces. It will tend to render them satisfied with a small advance in Christian attainments, and oftentimes make them spiritually conceited and proud, a consequence much to be guarded against."

At this part of his explanation, I again

interrupted my kind teacher with the following inquiry :—

“Is growth in sanctification necessary to salvation? Must all who would be saved, keep continually advancing in godliness, and all Christian graces? If this be the case, I fear many who believe will miss their crown in glory; for there are many, alas! very many with whom I am personally acquainted, whose faith has expanded but a very little indeed, since the day in which God first poured his converting grace into their hearts. Many who have not advanced scarce two steps, since the first day in which they were born again. I see in them the same inconsistencies, the same indecision of character, the same halting movements, the same sickly appearance, the same falling and rising again. I think they love Christ, but their love for him has not increased in ardour, or in brightness, since its first appearance in their hearts; they strive against sin, but not so powerfully nor so energetically as those who are growing in spiritual might ought to do. They are more easily led off into false positions than they would be, had their eyes gained a greater

insight into the beauties of religion and holiness. I know they believe and love the Saviour ; but if growth in grace and sanctification be necessary, I fear they will be numbered with the foolish virgins, in the day of judgment. Kindly, therefore, tell me the truth on this important matter. I cannot say how much my soul has been anguished by their conduct."

The old man looked on me, and as he looked, a shade of sorrow overcast his face, and a tear of sorrow rolled down his cheek.

"I am not astonished at your fears and your sorrow for those you name ; their state is calculated to make one weep,—their dimness instead of brightness,—their hesitation instead of confidence,—their halting, instead of walking with boldness and comfort,—all this will, I know, provoke your tears and fears. I can sympathize with you. I will, however, remove your fears on the ground of their salvation. They have repented, we have rejoiced over them ; they have faith, but only a faith that brings them to the hem of the garment, yet they are accepted ; they have love, and although it may be faint, yet it

is a proof of their being loved by Him, who will not 'break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax.' They have repentance, faith, and love enough to bring them to heaven, but not enough to enable them to hear the cheering words, 'Friend, go up higher.' They enjoy some of the comforts of religion on earth, but they miss many, many comforts that would be theirs, lived they more holy, more religious, and more Christian lives. They are but babes in Christ. It is indeed a ground for thankfulness, that they have any portion of spiritual life; but we should rejoice much more, and be much more thankful, could we see them contending earnestly for the foremost place in the ranks of the warriors of the cross,—could we behold them going from faith to faith, and from hope to hope, and from love to love, increasing, ascending, rising, until, although present upon earth, they place their affections in the heavens."

I could not refrain from interrupting my teacher at this turn of his discourse, for I was persuaded, by what he said, that growth in holiness and sanctification was greatly to be desired and sought after.

I interrupted him by saying, "Pray, tell me the best means of gaining to advancement in holiness. I perceive it is most desirable, I greatly long to know."

The old man smiled with satisfaction. He was pleased to see that he had called from my heart such desire for so good a thing.

"Look," he said, "on the next step of the ladder, read what is written there." I read, "CONTINUE INSTANT IN PRAYER." "That," he said, "is the secret of great progress in sanctification." "But what," I asked again, "is that link that connects the step of sanctification with the step of prayer?" for I had perceived that they were, as it were, joined together by a connecting band. "What does that signify?" "It signifies the great connexion that exists between the two; that they mutually affect one another very much; that when there is much prayer, there is much sanctification; that, again, where there is much sanctification, there is much prayer; that prayer produces sanctification, that sanctification is increased by prayer; that they mutually affect one another very intimately,

this is that that is signified by the connecting link."

"But," he said, "knowest thou what is prayer? knowest thou what is meant by the words, 'Continue instant in prayer?' Prayer is the greatest privilege of God's people upon earth. It is the means that they have of spreading all their wants and all their woes, all their desires and all their necessities, before the footstool of Him by whom they live and move and have their being. It is God's appointed channel for the flowing down of blessings upon his people's heads. His choicest good things are poured down in answer to his disciples' supplications. In prayer there is sweet and near communion between the children and the Head of the household, between the good Shepherd and the flock He hath marked with his blood. It is a refuge of his people in their sorrow; it is a support of his people in their woes; it is a staff to them when crushed by affliction, when fainting it is a cordial, when deserted by friends it cheers them, when fearful it supports their courage, when persecuted it nerves them against the faggot and the flame.

Are they poor? Prayer makes them contented; tossed by agony? it pours reviving oil down the wounds, and proves as refreshing as the physician and the balm of Gilead; it adds to faith, and to patience, and to perseverance. But its power is principally seen when the Christian is assaulted by some violent temptation. Does the adversary rush against him in all his madness and fury? does he tempt him as he did our risen Lord—‘All these will I give thee if thou wilt fall down and worship me?’ Does he assault him by means of covetousness, or lust, or uncleanness, or bitterness, or wrath, or strife?—in any such case the Christian who takes refuge in prayer proves more than conqueror. He goes into his chamber and shuts the door, and prays to his Father for support against the powerful trial of his faith; he prays for escape or support, and as he prays by the love of Him who saved him, who died for him, who rose again and ascended up on high that he might pour down gifts on men; his prayers are answered, answered in the way best calculated to bring him nigher unto God: a fresh measure of the Spirit is added unto him, and he is enabled to

go forth from his chamber and to say to the tempter in all the might of One mightier than he, 'Get thee behind me, Satan.' And prayer is attended with such beneficial consequences, because it brings the mortal into close contact with the immortal; it brings the weak to seek the aid of the strong; it brings one who has no inherent strength to the Great One, who is the fountain and source of all power and strength. Great is the believer's privilege in prayer. Would that it were highly prized. Would that they would follow the inscription you last read, that they would 'continue instant in prayer.' That they would pray under every temptation, under every trial, under every assault and allurements, under every internal and external attack; for if they did, few, very few, nay, I am bold to say, *none* would—could fall away from their steadfastness, none would grieve the Spirit, none would fall behind in running the Christian race."

Here the old man paused, and lifting up his hands, continued for a moment in silent meditation, and then spoke as follows:—

"I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven

and earth, that often during a long lifetime upon earth, thou heardest, and answeredst my prayers. I thank Thee, that thou gavest me daily bread for the body, and daily bread for the soul. I thank Thee, that thou didst put the desire into my heart, to pray for deliverance from sin; and that in answer to my prayer, thou visitedst me with thy salvation. I thank Thee, that when I fainted, thy Spirit refreshed me; when I was assaulted, thy Spirit fought for me my battles. I thank Thee, O heavenly Father, that I shall ever be a standing instance, throughout all eternity, that whenever I sought a gift at thy hand, in the name of thy dear Son, thou didst for me far more than I could ever have imagined. For this, O Father, I thank thee, and will thank thee for ever and for ever."

"But," said I, after a pause, "what is meant by the exhortation, 'Continue instant in prayer?'" "It means, that you should at all times foster that disposition of mind, that is ready to lay all its cares before our great Creator. That you should commence, continue, and end every work, and every undertaking with a supplication that God would

bless you; that you should live with the idea ever uppermost in your thoughts, that you are daily, and hourly, and momentarily in need of the superintendence and preservation of Him who created you. That your mind be so ordered, that it can recur, even in the midst of necessary duties, to the audience-chamber of the King of kings. It does not mean, that you are to be ever on your knees, and ever in your chamber, or in the sanctuary, offering up supplications. This is impossible. Were this the thing here intended, the business of life would stand still, and no Christian could work for his Master's cause. They who act upon this principle, too frequently fall into a way of the merest formality, repeating with the lips, words from which the heart and thoughts are far absent; which, when it happens, changes prayer into mockery, and supplication into insult. It is right, yea, most right—nay, more, it is your bounden duty, both at stated times in the secret of your closets, and at stated times in the public assemblages of the congregation, to unite heart and lip in spreading your wishes before the great Auditor of the universe; but

to do this continually, is not the thing required by the words, 'Continue instant in prayer;' for you will perceive, that such a course is utterly impracticable; and moreover, the prayer that proceeds from the overflowing heart, even in the midst of daily avocations, if proceeding in the name of our gracious and dear Intercessor, will find a very ready admittance at the gates of heaven. The heart-uttered words, 'Lord, help me,' 'aid me by thy counsel,' 'protect me in this hour,' 'shield me from this present temptation,' 'make me more holy,' 'give me further supplies of thy blessed Spirit,'—each, or any of these short sentences, arising from the sincere heart of the humblest disciple, is heard with all love and readiness by our Father, and presented with all love and readiness, in the golden censer, by the all-prevailing Advocate. The meaning of the sentence is, that the mind should be so disposed, that prayer should be offered up at stated periods, both in the closet and in the sanctuary; and that whenever any emergency arise, the mercy-seat be sought; and that at all times there be a link between the soul and God, reminding

it that his power is necessary to guide, support, and protect it."

"Prayer," continued the old man, "is despised by the wicked, because God, in his goodness, permits them to live to become old, to become mighty in power, and rich, because he sends his rain on the evil and on the good; but they greatly err, when they despise its efficacy. Did they know how much they were indebted to the prayers of others, they would not hold it in such estimation. Oh, if they remembered that there is One, who is never weary of interceding for them,—who is constantly saying, 'Let them alone this year also;' give them a further opportunity. Oh, if they remembered that there is One, who is ever presenting on their behalf, his precious blood and perfect obedience, they would doubt the efficacy of prayer no more. And again, they cannot tell how numerous are the prayers that others offer up to God on their behalf. If they could count the many pious servants of God, who pour out their souls from day to day on earth to God, imploring a continuance of his favours, even for those who trample on his

bounty, despise his laws,—perhaps they would then feel more the value of prayer. Elias was but one, and he prayed, and God heard and answered. Does not God, therefore, hear, when multitudes of the good pray in the spirit and power of Elias, on behalf of the ungrateful portion of the human family? Now, they may despise God's ordinance of prayer; but the time will come, when, beholding all things in their true light, they will be forced to acknowledge that they, wicked though they were, were by God's appointment indebted, very much indebted to prayer."

But it is time to look at the next step of the ladder.

I looked, and read:—"THEY THAT WAIT UPON THE LORD, MOUNT UP WITH WINGS."

"This tells of the great triumphs of prayer; they who wait upon the Lord in it, rise beyond their cares and anxieties, rise beyond their sorrows and perplexities,—rise beyond all sinful lusts and passions; rise in piety and holiness of life, in sanctification of spirit,—rise nigher and nigher to God and the Saviour. As the eagle, when he spreads

abroad his wings, can mount upwards, nigh the glory of the sun; so by the power of prayer, and the gifts that God thinks fit to send down in answer to prayer, the disciple of the Lamb rises higher and higher in Christian graces. He rises in love, he rises higher in peace, he rises higher in the witness of the Spirit,—nay, more, do you see that bright, very bright spot yonder, that illuminated with splendour and light,—do you see the words there written? ‘THE FULL ASSURANCE OF FAITH, OF HOPE AND SALVATION.’ Even to this, those attain who cleave to God in prayer. Yes, even while in the flesh, they feel within them a still small voice assuring them that they have in heaven a sure and certain dwelling-place. And what and how great their happiness is none can tell, except those who have experienced it. He who believes on the Saviour, and ventures all his hopes and trust on God’s promises, has much happiness, even happiness that the world can neither give nor take away; but his happiness cannot compare with the happiness of one who, clinging closely to God and Christ in prayer, and feeding his soul continually and

carefully with heavenly food, avoiding every impediment to his sanctification, reaches that blessed state of certainty of present salvation, and assured confidence of gaining the crown of glory that God hath prepared for all the disciples of his Son. This last indeed is happiness. He who has this has a mine of comfort in his soul. One who has it can sit down with folded arms and survey the rushing development of terrestrial things, and feel no large amount of terror and alarm. Whatever be his own position in life, he will find great consolation whenever he turns his mind back upon his inward hopes. While ungodly men are terrified lest they should be swept from all that is near and dear on earth, such an one has an anchor that will not suffer him to be moved from his tranquillity and peace. Is he a king upon a throne—he faints not even amid the threatenings of a tumultuous people. What though he be hurled from his throne, what though he must put off his diadem, what though he be shorn of his power, what though he be hurried to an undeserved death—even under all these circumstances he can ‘rejoice with joy unspeakable,’ knowing that

there is laid up for him a 'crown of glory,' a crown more bright, more sparkling, more rich, more refulgent than the crown that pressed his brow on earth. Or if he be a man taken from the people—does poverty, and sickness, and distress disturb his mind?—how much will he be gladdened by the bright gleam that illumines his inward man. It is but a little while, he says, and all this weariness will pass away, all this weeping and sorrow, all this anguish and disquiet, and then I feel confident of sharing all the blessings of heaven with my blessed Lord and Master; then I shall be placed at his right hand for evermore. Thus they who reach that step whereon the 'assured hope' is inscribed, gain much happiness for their souls. But it is a very great attainment, and comparatively few attain unto it. *Many* are called and sanctified, *few* of the many are assured Christians. *Many* lay hold of the principles of the doctrine of Christ, but *few* rise to the bright and gladdening height of assurance. And yet it is within their reach. If they would only be diligent, they would make their calling and election sure; they would gain for themselves this assurance. Young man,"

he said, turning his loving eyes on me,—
“young man, never be contented until you have been enabled to feel confidently, that your heart is filled with sure hopes of heaven. Repentance is good, and faith is good, and obedience is good, and love is good, these are very good possessions ; but assurance is far better—yes, assurance is much better, and it must be much better than all these, inasmuch as it can only spring from the unity of a sincere repentance, a sincere faith, and a sincere love, and a sincere obedience, in the same heart and individual.

“Assurance,” continued the old man, “is a light from heaven caught upon earth. It is the culminating point in the Christian’s ascent; it lightens the dark valley with heavenly rays, and plucks the poison from the shaft of death. Do you see that dark and gloomy spot a little higher up, that that flings its shadow darkly on every side ; that that must be passed by all before they can reach the kingdom of heaven, nay, it must be passed by all who pass from the seen to the unseen ? Read what is written.”

I looked and read, “THE LAST ENEMY IS DEATH.”

"This is a sickly spot in the eye of all who meet it without full preparation. Even they who have gone to Jesus, at the approach of death, shudder and cling close to the Saviour and his promises. Many good and valiant soldiers faint at its approach and lose their confidence in its murky shadows; but he who is 'assured,' who possesses assurance, lifts high his heavenly lantern, holds up the light he has over the coming darkness, and by its aid looks joyously into the scenes beyond, and by its aid crosses the shadows in high hope and certainty. If you open the 'little book,' and read the Apostle Paul's second letter to Timothy, you will find that he looked calmly on death,—nay, more, looked joyously through it to a happy and glorious reception in the kingdom of heaven. And so would it be with every warrior of the cross. They would pass the darkness exulting, did they press forward during their journey with all possible earnestness, and succeed in assuring their souls, that they had certain part and lot in the blessed blood and redemption of the Lord Jesus."

"I can testify," said the old man, "that

assurance is a storehouse of joy. Often has it been an anchor to my soul, in its wearyings and cares. Often has it raised my drooping head; often has it eased my aching heart; often has it spoken to me sweetly in the darkness of the night; often, when I had no earthly comforter, the assurance that Jesus was certainly on my side, whispered loving accents in my ears, and bade me pursue my pilgrimage rejoicing. Oh, that all Christians would seek assurance—it is more precious than thousands of gold and silver.”

At this point of our conversation, becoming again perplexed at a thought suggested by my aged friend's remarks, I interrupted him, to inquire, if assurance were necessary to salvation. “Can none enter heaven, who gain not assurance upon earth?”

“Young man,” he answered, with his gentle kindness, “were assurance necessary to salvation, few, as I observed above, would reach the company of the blessed. Heaven would be, comparatively speaking, uninhabited by ransomed souls. Assurance is not necessary. If you turn your eyes downward on the ladder, you will see the door of death

close by faith,—close by the words, ‘Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden.’ After the first look of faith has been cast on our dear Redeemer, ever after that, the door of entrance into heaven stands wide open. The first germ of faith that shows its existence in the heart, is an index that he who possesses it, possesses also a sure title to the abiding city of God. Faith in Christ unlocks the door, and it continues unlocked during the residue of the Christian’s journey. Does he die when first possessed of faith, he is safe; for the youngest faith will save him. When once he can say in all sober sincerity, ‘Lord, I believe,’ then he passes from death unto life, and acquires a passport that ensures him a certain entrance into the city of God. Faith in the Son of God,—faith that leads its possessor to put full trust in the blood and atonement of Immanuel, this is all that is needed to raise the sinner from the dust, and lift him to eternal glory.”

“Why then,” I asked, “are you so earnest in wishing all Christians to be assured of their salvation, if faith in Christ Jesus be enough to save them from eternal woe?”

"Because," he replied, "I would have them happier in life, and more exalted when they arrive in glory. Because I know, that they who gain the bright pearl of assurance below, receive a bright diadem above. Young man, salvation is of grace, not of works, lest any man should boast, it is the free gift of God. Freely he devised the plan; uninfluenced by external power, he spared not the Son of his love. Of his own-free will he pours down his Holy Spirit, and melts the hard and stony heart. Freely from first to last, in the matter of man's salvation, is every gift bestowed. 'God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.' Salvation originated in the love of God, by the love of God it is carried on, and by the love of God it will be consummated. If you suppose that your works have any part whatever in winning for you a title to yon bright abode, you will be guilty of a fearful error,—of nothing less than pouring scorn on the Son of God, the Restorer of the fallen, and the Redeemer of our race. This you must fully

understand, namely, that heaven is reached through Christ, not through, either in whole or in part, any works of sinners ; but although this is so, yet God in his love and mercy and condescension, has declared, that he will judge all the human race according to their works. Those out of Christ, being judged according to their works, will be banished from the brightness of God's presence, inasmuch as without Christ's righteousness, they will appear wretched and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked. And those in Christ being judged according to what they wrought for Christ, will be awarded a place in heaven, in proportion to their diligence. They will be admitted to heaven solely for Christ's sake ; but as their love and their works were greater or less, they will be seated nigher or more distant from the presence of the Lamb. From this, therefore, you may understand the great preciousness of assurance. As it can be arrived at only by diligent perseverance in well-doing,—by following closely and narrowly the example of Him who died for sinners,—by striving earnestly to shine like lights in the world—by pressing forward eminently in the

heavenly race—by avoiding every offence—by keeping well the vineyard of the soul—by living near to God and Jesus,—so it is a mark of a watchful and faithful servant, and a sign to signify that its possessor will be promoted to the government “of ten cities,” in the kingdom of the Lord. In the spiritual building, there will be vessels of silver, and vessels of gold; there will be some stones more polished than others; the vessels of gold, and the more polished stones, will number among them those who, while on earth, were never satisfied until they had assured themselves of their safety; the vessels of silver, and the stones of inferior polish, will number among them all those who were satisfied with a lower proportion of faith. You ask me, what benefit is assurance? Assurance adds to a Christian’s happiness below; it adds to a Christian’s happiness in heaven. Assurance makes its owner chief among ten thousand, and eminently lovely. They who have faith, will shine as the brightness of the firmament; but they who have assurance, will shine like the stars for ever and ever.

Here the old man ceased speaking for a time ; and I was persuaded by what he had said, that assurance was indeed worth the seeking.

“ But,” he continued, after a pause, “ assurance is not the only means the Saviour uses to guide and support his people in the passage through the dark valley. In the ‘ little book,’ he has set forth much that will prove most valuable in this trying juncture, —and trying it is indeed. Yea, there are many things that render it very trying. Assurance is, however, the chief, the best, as you may gather from the following. The world in which you live is not all unmitigated woe and sorrow and pain, and vexation of spirit. When regarded, indeed, as the one thing needful,—when the human race estimate it as that for which they should live, for which they should labour and toil, —when the only proposed object of their life, is to gather together into their laps the largest possible amount of its gold and silver, and of its houses and lands, of its honours and pleasures,—in this case it proves all vanity and vexation of spirit ; and its hopes disappoint, and its expectations perish, and in the end,

a review of it, and all its concerns, will suggest the mournful declaration made by Solomon, in the days of his wanderings, 'Vanity of vanities, all is vanity.' Such it always exhibits itself to those who bow down before, and do it worship, it exhibits itself as dust and ashes. But on the contrary, when it is promoted to the proper place in the human heart, to that place assigned to it by religion, when it is loved, but not idolized,—when it is enjoyed, but not worshipped,—when the love of God comes first, and the love for the world is regulated by it,—when the mind is purified by the Spirit, and the affections are restrained by the wisdom that cometh down from above,—when sin is avoided, and all the sinful ways of the wicked people of the world; in this case, the globe on which you live has very much that gives pleasure and delight to the heart. Is not the light of the sun a cheering thing? Are not the green fields, and the bending corn, and the waving woods, and the sweet-songed birds, sources of great enjoyment? Are not the comforts of home, the reciprocated affections of domestic life;

the love of parents to children, of children to parents, of friends to friends—are not these fountains, from which certain proportions of pleasure are constantly springing? Indeed, to a mind under the influence of true religion, there are very many means of enjoyment in your world—books, and the pursuit of knowledge, and other things that I need not name, but with which you are well acquainted; and these means of enjoyment make even a Christian man often draw back from the contemplation of the parting day. To leave behind him scenes in which his early days were passed—companions, and friends, and relations that shared his love—the thought of this sometimes calls up a pang from the soul. Men who have no religion, and whose lives are spent in the pursuit of what is unlawful and sinful, and therefore in what brings them thorns and sorrows—these bitterly think of the time when the soul is to be unloosed from its earthly companion. How much more natural, therefore, would it be to see the children of God lamenting in the hour of death, if there were nothing to remove their grief. But there is the necessary balm, and

this balm is in the doctrine of assurance. Does the Christian say, death is coming, and I must leave behind me my gold and my silver,—assurance says, there are in heaven treasures that wax not old, gold and silver that will never know decay. Does the Christian say, I must leave my family and friends, the loved ones of my soul—assurance says, there are friends gone before, loved ones and loving ones, anxiously expecting his arrival. Does the Christian say, I must leave the landscape that has so often gladdened my heart, and the fine and noble panorama of green fields and lofty mountains, and rushing rivers and rolling tides. Assurance says, there are purer and better and nobler, in the abiding city, whose builder and maker is God. In a word, he who has assurance, will feel little anxiety with regard to those whom he may leave behind him on earth; for he can trust implicitly to Jesus, and he will find no anxiety at the approach of death, inasmuch, as by it, death will be gilded with a bright and a holy brightness. Seek then, I pray you again, seek assurance; it will make you happy in life—it will enable you to part more easily

from the things you love on earth, it will exalt you to a higher glory in the kingdom of the Father."

Here again I was induced to interrogate my venerable informant, for I felt very uneasy, on behalf of the great number of Christians who never possess assurance. I was very anxious to know how they passed through the gate from earth to heaven.

"They pass through in safety," he replied. "Even the lambs are protected by the Shepherd. He invisibly protects them, and shields them from danger; but although they are protected, and reach the end most safely, the passage is not unattended with uncertainty and doubt to themselves. They are tossed often between hope and fear. With some the hopes preponderate,* with some the fears. Some have less fears, and some less hopes. They are somewhat comforted by the promises of the Gospel, but they seldom receive much rich consolation, until they have put off their earthly tabernacle. Dying Christians are often chastened in death, on account of their lingering in life. Their sun is often darkened at setting, because when

they had opportunity, they did not trim their lamps with all possible diligence, but suffered some of their light to wear itself away, without being occupied in some reproductive employment. As there is a great difference between hope and certainty, so there is a great difference between the death of a Christian who has, and of a Christian who has not assurance. The one is seeking forgiveness, the other walks hand in hand with his elder brother and Redeemer."

"But who are they," I said, "that I can perceive on the confines of death on the other side? Their garments appear white and glistening, and they seem as if they were ever ready to perform some tender act of love and mercy—they seem as if they were ever ready to spread their wings on some loving errand. They have the aspect of those who watch continually their Master's looks, and take delight in executing their Master's commissions. They seem as though their bodies were formed of materials less gross than the human frame. Who are they—what is their business—on what errands are they occupied?"

"They are God's messengers. They are continually waiting on the commands of the Son of God. They execute varied duties. They have often been sent to comfort mourners ; they have been sent to open prisons ; they have been sent to punish very guilty sinners ; they were in close attendance during that awful night in the garden. They witnessed the resurrection, as they had announced the birth, of the only-begotten Son of the Father. In past ages of humanity, they often became visible to human eyes, agents of comfort, of rebuke, of defence, of punishment ; but under the present dispensation, since apostolic times, they have not been so manifested. Still, however, they are ever in attendance upon the sons of God. When the body ceases to be a fit lodging-place for the soul, when those that had been joined by God, are again disunited by the same Almighty power ; then the angelic messengers fly down at the bidding of their Master, and convey the emancipated soul to the realms of glory. The journey seems a lonely one, when viewed from the earth. When the body is wasting, and its strength is de-

clining, and the hour of dismissal seems approaching, the soul is inclined often to think that it must go forth lonely and unattended ; that it must bid farewell to those who are at its home, and set forward a deserted, solitary traveller, into the abodes of the emancipated. But neither is it deserted, nor is the journey long. God's messengers are in attendance ; and as soon as the spirit escapes from its house in the wilderness, they bear it in their company with shouts of joy and hymns of praise. They bear it speedily to the mansions of glory, to the bright abodes of bliss, to dwell with Christ and God for ever. And it is a cheering sight that opens before the soul, on its separation from the body. The moment prior to death, it was in the midst of tears and sorrow,—friends and relatives weeping, and refusing to be comforted. Children and wife, and father and mother, and kinsfolk and acquaintances, sobbing in anguish, because their loved one is departing ; but when the soul has passed away, the weeping is ended, the tears are dried,—there is no more sobbing and sighing ; shouts of joy run through the angelic hosts, and a loud

and happy welcome is given to the new arrival from the place of probation."

"But whither," I said, "do the angelic messengers bear the souls of the redeemed? I have looked up attentively to where they are congregated, but I cannot penetrate beyond their circle to the regions beyond, nor can I discern the locality of the ransomed of the Lord. I would gladly know the certain destination of my spirit after death, if that were possible."

"Again," said the old man, "you are asking a question, which it is not permitted me to answer; it includes some of those secret things, that God has not as yet unfolded to man. He has not thought fit to make known precisely the locality to which the children of adoption are removed. He has told them generally, that he will create a new heavens and a new earth,—that righteousness, and peace, and glory will be there; that he will rule over them there, in the person of Christ Jesus; but as to its portion in his universe, he does not reveal it to those who dwell in earthly tabernacles—nor is it necessary for your happiness to dive into this. Is it not

sufficient for you to know, that, wherever it is, however distant or near it may be, a very short time is enough to enable the soul freed from the body, to fly to it? Is it not sufficient for you to know that Christ will be there,—that he has prepared it, that it is one of the many mansions in the house of the Father? The ‘little book’ says nothing on the subject, that can be tied strictly to any known locality. I know, indeed, that some good and pious men are very earnest to prove that the globe on which you live, will be the future residence of the saints, and that Christ will reign upon it in person for ever. Nay, more than this, I know there are some who imagine, that the earth embraces all the abodes of the righteous and the wicked that ever lived upon it, and they strive to prove their separate opinions from holy writ. But, believe me, the best course on this subject is to wait patiently the development of God’s plans, and works, and doings. Live to God and to Christ; seek their honour and your own salvation, and you will be provided against every emergency. If you have Christ enthroned in your heart, it will be

quite ample consolation for you to know that, wherever your future abode may be, you will be like Him, and be with Him, and share his love for ever. Be always prepared for the encounter with the last enemy,—have your armour ready for this last fight, and you will be ready for every possible contingency. Live in expectation of being summoned at any moment to pass through death, and to see your Redeemer face to face, and you will be perfectly prepared for any locality whatever. You will be prepared for heaven, no matter where that heaven may be.

“I can assure you, however, that no man that ever thought upon the subject while on earth, has been able to arrive at any true idea of the final resting-place of the just. How can those who are exposed to the buffetings of Satan, and the sins of the flesh, how can these form any correct idea of a state where sin and Satan will be no more? How can those who live in a world where love is disturbed by envy and jealousy, and where pride, and vain-glory, and selfishness agitate even the hearts of Christians? How can such form any adequate estimate of that

happy, happy land, where neither envy, nor jealousy, nor pride, nor vain-glory can find an entrance? It has been truly written that the human faculties are inadequate to form any such estimate."

"But," I said, "if I may not inquire after the locality, may I not inquire after the numbers of the redeemed,—are they very many?"

"Many they are indeed—so many that no man can number them. They can be numbered by God alone.

"God be thanked, the blood of Christ washes an innumerable throng. Every kingdom, and people, and nation upon earth, send up immense armies to swell the hosts of the Church triumphant. 'Suffer the little children to come,' has been said by Jesus, and they go to him from the four winds of heaven. Every soul that dies in infancy is there—every little one, despised as it may have been on earth, is an honoured guest at the banquet of the Lamb. Mothers need not weep for their little ones, for of all, these are the most highly favoured. Washed from their original guilt by the death of their Redeemer, they are welcome dwellers in the homes of the happy.

All infants, from the most distant generations of men—all infants from every quarter and locality of earth—all infants wherever they may have been born, and wherever they may have died, find a speedy admission into the kingdom of glory. There are some indeed, who would say that, unless the infant be baptized with water, it cannot enter into the kingdom of God. But the 'little book' says nothing to that effect. It is evident from it, that as in Adam all infants became involved in the sin of Adam, so in Christ all infants escape from the guilt of Adam's first sin; and will be condemned for nothing except for their own actual transgressions against the law of God. Baptism admits them to the visible Church on earth—Christ admits them to the invisible Church in heaven; and the truth of what our Saviour spake on earth will be seen in heaven,—'Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise.' And if to infants we add the many who have died in the faith, from the death of Abel until the present moment, and if to these be added the many that will be gathered into heaven, during that glorious time when the earth will

be full of the knowledge of the Lord, and when all shall know Him from the least unto the greatest, the number of the ransomed will be so great, that no words will be more suited to express its vastness, than the words which are here written : 'After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands.' Blessed be God, our Saviour and Redeemer will have gained a noble victory."

"After this I would know their occupations. How are they occupied immediately after death ? how will they be occupied for ever ?"

"Beyond what is written I dare not reveal," he replied. "Guided by what is written, you may learn that they who are admitted to the communion of God's people, will not live in eternity in idleness. The Father worketh, and the Son worketh, and the Spirit worketh—and their subjects will be busy subjects. There will be the rulers and the ruled—there will be the princes and

the people—there will be communities and cities—there will be vast fields of knowledge to explore—there will be marvellous works of God to investigate. Rest assured, whatever may be the condition of God's people, idleness will form no part of it. In your present state, do you not know by experience that they who are most zealous in lawful occupations are the happiest, and that misery ever follows those who are idle; so by analogy you may conclude that there will be no want of happy occupation for the citizens of heaven. No," he continued, "eternity will roll on, and on, and on; ages will be constantly flowing; but the longest flight of duration will bring no sense of weariness, nor lack of occupation to the people of God—so great is the wisdom, and so great is the power of the Great Creator."

"But why is it," I once more asked,—“why is it that God's people will be so much more holy in heaven, than they are on earth? Why can they become so much more sanctified in the courts above? Is it not the same Spirit that guideth, and sanctifieth, and enlighteneth on earth, and that guideth, and

sanctifieth, and enlighteneth in heaven? Is not the Saviour equally powerful to defend and protect on earth as in heaven? What then causes this difference?"

"You forget," he replied, "that death works a great change for the *believer*,—at death he leaves behind him the body of his corruption—at death he leaves behind him the temptations to do evil with which he is beset in human nature. The incentives to many sins will be entirely removed. The appetites, which become occasions of falling to those possessed of mortal bodies, will cease to afflict, when what is mortal is changed into immortality; and as flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, so multiplied sins that affect flesh and blood will be unable to follow the emancipated spirits into heaven. This will be one cause of their happiness; but the chief cause doubtless is, to be sought in the fact that God will remove all possibility of sinning, and fill the hearts of all with the fulness of his Spirit. And you will remember that Satan, the prince of the power of the air, who now has permission to roam on earth unrestrained, will

be tied in chains in the sad regions of darkness."

The old man here appeared disposed to conclude the conversation, thinking that he had given me sufficient information on all necessary events, and he was preparing to leave me, when once more I begged to be heard. "When will the Saviour come again?"

"You know not what you ask—you do not perceive that if there were any certain knowledge given on this subject, it would prove injurious to the Christian Church. Did the Church know the precise moment of his coming, its members might be induced to be remiss during a portion of the time, persuading themselves that some time before the hour appointed, they would shake off their inactivity and watch carefully for his coming; but now as it is unrevealed when He is to come, the duty of watching is ever pressing—the duty of being ever prepared is constantly before the mind. Believe me, it is for wise reasons that that hour is concealed; but if you would be prepared for it, be always watching—watch and pray—pray; watch;

and thus, whenever Christ Jesus comes, He will find you ready."

Thus the old man counselled me ; and while I was preparing to inquire something further of him, his name was called, and he joined the celestial army, and left me pondering what he said. Soon after I awoke from sleep, and found that it was a lovely dream—a dream that made such a deep impression, that I compared my recollections with the Word of God; and having found their strict agreement with it, I have written them down in the foregoing pages.

May God render them profitable ! May at least one soul be induced by their perusal to awake from his sleeping and darkness, and commence that noble ascent, fixing his eyes on Jesus, and gain at last that glorious eminence, where, seated in the midst of the noble army of martyrs, he will drink in for ever the happiness and the holiness of heaven. May one sinner be led from earth to heaven by it ; for " he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death and hide a multitude of sins."

Dear reader, may that one be you !

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